

To our Resident Advisors and Social Justice Advocates,

We appreciate the opportunity to engage with you in open conversation about your concerns and requests for accommodation. We hear you and want to do what we can to address the issues you have raised. This written response follows the conference call with Barb Remsburg and the HRE Residential Education Leadership team on Aug. 23, which was arranged after receiving your initial email earlier that day. We offer this response in the hopes of continuing a dialogue that is centered on the health and well-being of our entire campus community.

The concerns brought forward by the Student Leaders are welcomed. We want students to use their voices and to share their perspectives and appreciate when they share ideas. As we prepared for fall, we planned and prepared for a low risk move-in process in collaboration with our public health experts. Public health experts continue to learn more about and evolve their guidance on the risk and best response to coronavirus; given that, we anticipate the residential community, like the rest of campus, also will continue to evolve its practices. We are responding in good faith and look forward to a successful outcome that includes ongoing engagement and collaboration on these issues and any other concerns or suggestions.

We have listed each concern you shared, with our responses, below.

• Frequent testing provided for all Student Leaders; Student Leaders should be tested once Move-In concludes

- HRE has arranged for Student Leaders and HRE live-in staff who wish to be retested, at no cost, to do so at the Madsen Center parking lot testing site today (Thurs.) or Friday from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. or on Saturday from 9 a.m. to noon.
- HRE will also make arrangements for other front-line staff, who are concerned they have been exposed to COVID-19 positive residents, to be able to be tested. Details will be forthcoming.
- Going forward, Student Leaders, as with all students, who are symptomatic or identified as a contact by someone who is positive for COVID-19, may call the Health and Testing Hotline at 801-587-0712 for guidance about their symptoms, exposure and whether to be tested.
- With the health of our campus in mind and guided by U of U Health experts, HRE provided an initial round of tests for all asymptomatic Student Leaders prior to move-in. All students were tested as they arrived to identify asymptomatic individuals who might be positive for COVID-19. During this process, various measures—including some that exceeded public health experts' guidance—were

taken to reduce exposure risk to staff working at that location, from use of protective gear to physical distancing.

- HRE would like to arrange a meeting between Student Leaders and health professionals to discuss any health questions you may have.

- **Hazard pay for Student Leaders who have tested positive for COVID-19**

- Student Leaders who have additional work positions outside of the Student Leader role at the university can explore the Families First Coronavirus Response Act to determine if it would apply if they were to become positive for COVID-19, <https://www.hr.utah.edu/coronavirus/FFCRA.php>.
- Compensation for Student Leaders includes the cost of housing and a meal plan, equating to an average of \$10,180 for the Fall and Spring semesters.
- Housing & Residential Education costs are paid for by residents, primarily through paying rent. HRE will continue to benchmark other similar institutions in regard to compensation for student leaders, as requested on the August 23 call.
- In the event a Resident Advisor or Social Justice Advocate tests positive for COVID-19 that person would be moved to an isolation room and we would provide support services, such as meal delivery. They also would be released from their responsibilities until it is appropriate for them to resume work.
- We have modified roles of Resident Advisors and Social Justice Advocates to reduce exposure risk through emphasis on physical distancing practices (no collection of physical IDs, not entering a room), creation of a virtual version of the Residential Learning Model, provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for use indoors, use of virtual meetings with residents and supervisors, and cancellation of all events.

- **Breakdown of COVID-19 testing daily**

- On Monday, Aug. 24, the university [announced testing results](#) for students who moved into residence halls between Aug. 3-Aug. 23. That information was made available to Student Leaders prior to its public release.
- The campus website coronavirus.utah.edu site has been newly revised and, as of Monday, Aug. 24, 2020, includes a count of reported positive cases for the previous seven days.
- HRE sends notifications to area communities when there is a positive report the prior day in that community.
- Public Health code of ethics protects the privacy of individuals, so we do not provide more detailed reports to persons other than those who are providing support to the resident.

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

- Housing & Residential Education has supplied sanitizer and wipes in community areas for all residents to use.
- Additional PPE—safety glasses, face shield, gloves and face coverings—has now been received and issued to every Student Leader through their supervisors. If a Student Leader needs replacement PPE, they should speak to their supervisor, who will replace the items quickly.

- Near the area duty bags there are also additional supplies in case a Student Leader forgets their equipment. These supplies include gloves, medical-grade face coverings, and cleaning wipes. Resident Directors will ensure these supplies remain stocked and available.
- In preparation for welcoming students back to campus, the UCrew and Move-In staff and Student Leader shifts were formatted using guidance from the CDC, which included operating primarily outside and with physical distancing.

• Guarantee that Resident Directors and Graduate Assistants will not be overburdened with additional work as a result of our demands

- HRE will continue to work on removing non-vital functions from the daily workload so that our focus is dedicated to directly supporting students.
- The HRE value of “team” is an integral component of our success this fall. We know that our mission and the residential experience could not be upheld without the commitment and dedication of individuals from all our department functional areas. We care deeply about our team members and pledge to work together to share the workload and emotional stress that operating during a pandemic creates.
- There is no question that all of us are working harder than ever and in new ways to accomplish our essential tasks and support the health and well-being of our campus community. As a result, this may require team members to absorb some new responsibilities to ensure that we continue to provide the same high level of service and support we are known for. Every effort will be made to continually evaluate and balance workloads appropriately.
- Staff at all levels within HRE are currently providing support to students in quarantine and isolation, including conducting case investigation, contact tracing, notifications, meal delivery and follow up.

• Direct regular communication with administration about COVID-19 related updates before they are sent out to the public

- We appreciate the request that our team members, as relevant, receive COVID-19 updates before they are made public and we are committed to making that happen while also being mindful of health privacy requirements.
- Every Wednesday department supervisors are part of a COVID-19 conference call. Supervisors are able to ask questions and receive updates. Supervisors are asked to relay this information to their staffs and to provide additional context as needed as to how this information applies to that team.
- As we begin weekly Student Leader team meetings, supervisors will be taking advantage of this time to share and receive information and updates. Your input is vital, from our methods and frequency of communication to topics that need to be addressed with residents and questions about situations we may not have considered.
- The RHA Student Leader Council developed a newsletter and we are engaged in a conversation about continuing this newsletter as a conduit for regular communication.

- Opportunities for open forums, such as the ones held in July and on August 23 will be established.
- We are committed to working with staff and student leaders as we develop new processes or protocols and to keeping you informed about changes before they are launched.

- **Rescind the requirement for Student Leaders to attend “Promote and Go’s” in person**

- A modified approach to learning outcome delivery is under development, which would replace events hosted by SJAs and the Promote & Go strategy implemented by RAs.

- **Evaluate and maintain the contractual 20-hour work week**

- We appreciate and are sensitive to the fact that these extraordinary times have required extraordinary efforts from all team members.
- The extended move-in during August, created to accommodate coronavirus testing, is one example and created a high demand on our most limited resource: time.
- In recognition of that, HRE eliminated a number of responsibilities associated with move-in, such as Promote & Go and attendance at events such as Move-in Movie, Neighborhood Night, New Student Welcome, and the Class Photo.
- We expect that Student Leaders will return to a 20-hour work week as the semester gets underway. If you are consistently working more than a 20-hour work week, we encourage you to talk with your supervisor about your responsibilities and time commitments.
- Student Leaders may request a [Temporary Work Adjustment](#) to their position, with no repercussions, if they feel unable to perform a specific function of their position. This process is managed by Human Resources.
- Student Leaders have the option to defer their appointment until August 2021. If a Student Leader chooses to leave their role for the 2020-2021 academic year, we will welcome them back in August 2021, without needing to go through the full application process. The deferment form is attached to this email and also available from supervisors.

- **Written statement saying that there will be no retaliation against Student Leaders due to actions regarding their safety during COVID-19**

- There will be zero retaliation against Student Leaders who choose to either support or not support the Utah Resident Advisor and Social Justice Advocate Group that has brought forth these concerns. We support your right to free expression and are committed to providing a forum to address your concerns without fear of retaliation

- **Full transparency of the contractual requirements of “duties as assigned” in relation to COVID-19 duties**

- Many of the items that fall under “duties as assigned” are modifications to typical responsibilities of the Resident Advisor role. These items were covered during

the July conference calls open to student leaders as well as reviewed in August Student Leader training. They include:

- Building a virtual community with residents
 - Supporting students in connecting to campus resources that support their wellness
 - Virtual outreach to residents from your community while they are in quarantine or isolation
 - Supporting, but not being solely responsible for the enforcement of, COVID-19 policies such as the guest policy, use of face coverings and encouraging physical distancing
 - Ethical use of data you may receive about isolation or quarantine spaces or residents in those spaces, to avoid stigmatization and protect privacy
- Currently, Student Leaders are not responsible for delivering meals to the outside of a door of a resident who is in isolation or quarantine. However, if the quantity of meals needed to be delivered outpaces the capacity of persons to support delivery, Student Leaders may be asked to assist in order to meet this basic need.
 - Student Leaders are not responsible for delivering mail or packages to residents in isolation or quarantine.

• The entire HRE staff should be given the ability to opt out of doing meal delivery for COVID-19 positive residents if concerned for their safety

- We received guidance from Public Health professionals about our meal delivery process. They identified that meal delivery as a low-risk task.
- We are providing meal delivery and outreach to residents to support them while they are in quarantine and isolation, recognizing that without this support we would jeopardize the health of the entire campus community.
- HRE is hiring designated Meal Delivery Staff for weekend and holiday coverage to support meal deliveries, as approved by Vice President Lori McDonald.
- We are implementing additional guidelines to further reduce any risk associated with performing meal deliveries. These include:
 - Person delivering meals should wear a face covering at all times
 - Meal delivery will remain a contactless process. The resident in isolation is instructed not to open their door while the delivery occurs.
- Staff and Student Leaders who are at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 may request a [Temporary Work Adjustment](#) to be exempted from this support task.

• Written support of housing security for student leaders in the event that campus shuts down.

- If circumstances require us to cancel or end housing contracts early, we will support Student Leaders in remaining in housing and continuing to serve in their roles, along with other residents who need to live on campus in order to be academically successful.

As a department and as a campus, we have learned a lot about our ability to manage and function within this pandemic and we are grateful for all you are doing to help us navigate this situation. We look forward to more conversations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barb Remsburg".

Barb Remsburg
Executive Director of Housing & Residential Education

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lori McDonald".

Dr. Lori McDonald
Vice-President for Student Affairs